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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the study which attempts to determine if civic education and political socialization topics are international in scope and, moreover, if instruments can be designed to measure cross-national effects of such education. An international committee first meeting in Hamburg, Germany, in 1966, decided to treat the subject conceptually in terms of universalities. National Centers were asked to supply information to 20 basic questions regarding the major goals of civic education. After receiving replies from these centers the international committee met to determine which curriculum elements were of common importance cross-nationally. Cognitive test specifications were designed to measure three different levels of population education and of abstractions. 1500 cognitive items, clarified by content, topic, and abstraction level, were developed for use at three educational levels. Following the identification of certain common areas of political processes through the systematic content analysis of national materials in the area, various types of student attitudinal measures were developed as a result of the IEA dry runs. Several hundred questions will be measured during 1972 through analysis of data and the results published sometime in 1973. (Author/SJM)

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The I.E.A. Study of ...

CIVIC EDUCATION

by Russell F. Farnen

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THE IEA STUDY OF
CIVIC EDUCATION

by Russell F. Farnen

The IEA civic education and political socialization study was one of the six subject areas selected for inclusion in the IEA survey. The need for such a study was self evident since all political systems are engaged to some extent (on a formal or informal basis) in the political socialization of their youth. Various western, industrialized nations, for instance, spend considerable time, effort, and money on formal courses or curricula dealing with political subjects. Consequentl it was decided that an organized study of this field was worth some exploratory work in order to discover whether or not such a topic was truly international in scope and if instruments could be designed to measure cross national effects of such education. A position paper written by two Swedish scholars in 1966 provided sufficient impetus to begin this exploratory study of civic education in several nations. However neither they nor we realized at that point in time the dimensions which this quite unique research enterprise would eventually reach. An international committee first met in Hamburg, Germany, in November, 1966. The committee has since changed membership somewhat and now consists of Dr. Aldo Fabi (Italy), Dr. Sixten Marklund (Sweden), Dr. Mohammed Mashayekhi (Iran), Dr. Franklin Patterson (United States), Mr. Leslie Smith (England), and Dr. Judith Torney (United States), with Dr. Russell Farnen (United States)

as Chairman. Dr. A. N. Oppenheim (England), who is a consultant to IEA on the construction of affective measures, has worked a great deal with this committee. Mr. Kai Lehtonen (Finland) and Professor Wolfgang Hilligen (Federal Republic of Germany) have also attended one meeting of the committee.

From the start the international civic education committee recognized that the subject under consideration could be treated conceptually (in terms of universalities, such as political power, decision making, deference and change) with respect to major components of civil/political life, and that individual processes of feeling, thinking and behaving politically vis à vis one's self, others, groups, communities, nations and the world community could be measured meaningfully. Basic questions such as "what does the individual feel, know or do about political power as it relates to himself and others?" were felt to be important. Those National Centers which had committed themselves tentatively to participate in the civic education study were requested to supply information regarding the major goals of civic education as seen in public documents and curricular statements, civic education tests, summaries of textual materials, time spent in teaching civic education, teaching methods, teacher training, the role of governmental agencies and others in influencing the civics curriculum, the development of experimental curricula, recent research reports and the relative amount of instruction devoted to specific topics of study such as local, state, regional, national and international subjects.

After receiving replies to the twenty basic questions asked of National Centers, the international committee met to determine which curriculum elements were of common importance cross-nationally. At that point cognitive and affective grids (or test specifications) were developed and substantive areas to be included in the student, teacher, school and national background questionnaires were identified. In the 'cognitive' area these grids were designed to account for three different population levels (Population I - 10 year olds, Population II - 14 year olds and Population IV - the terminal year of secondary education or the pre-university grade), three different levels of abstraction (à la Bloom et al. taxonomies of educational objectives - simple, complex and abstract abilities). Major topics of instruction were identified and are concerned with a) Fundamentals and Nature of Citizenship (e.g. political sovereignty, rights, nationalism, participation, power, democracy, etc); b) and c) Political Processes and Institutions - National Topics (e.g. constitutions, historical development, levels of government, legislative, executive and judicial functions, public opinion, political parties, elections, decision making, etc.); d) International Topics (e.g. foreign policy, international relations and organizations, comparative politics, etc.); e) Economic Processes and Institutions (e.g. government and the economy, labor unions, agriculture, inflation, welfare, etc.) and finally f) Social Processes and Institutions (e.g. schools, communications, crime, traffic, etc.). Other civics oriented factors (such as current events, the problem solving method, critical

thinking, methodology of the social sciences, interdisciplinary approach and the like) were meant to cut across all six of the areas a) to f) mentioned above.

In all some 1,500 cognitive items were developed for use at the three educational levels. These questions were classified by both the content areas (a) to f) above) and the three ability levels (simple, complex and abstract). Anchor or 'equating' items were included to link Populations I and II, and II and IV.

In the 'attitudinal' area the results of the systematic content analysis of national materials yielded certain common areas such as democracy, tolerance, 'good' citizenship, civil liberties, efficacy, egalitarianism, women's rights, majority rule, racial equality, political participation, law observance, community service, dissent/opposition, loyalty and internationalism. Interviews were also carried out with 10 year old and 14 year old students in certain countries which confirmed the types of attitudinal concerns emanating from the content analysis of materials.

As a result of pilot work, pre-testing and the IEA 'dry run,' various types of measures were developed. These include students' perceptions of how institutions and processes work in practice. This instrument measures student reactions to such political institutions and practices as elections, laws, parliament, democratic government, the UN, political parties, welfare agencies, labor unions, large business organizations, and police forces. Measures of childrens' perceptions of power and responsiveness in local councils and the national government were also developed. Attitude measures such as democratic/

authoritarian characteristics, tolerance and civil liberties, efficacy and responsiveness, and women's rights were constructed. Other measures of 'active,' 'disengaged' and 'non-political' citizenship behaviors now exist. In these (and other) attitudinal instruments student scores on 'don't know' and/or 'uncertain' were introduced in order to indicate cognitive growth across age cohorts. (For a report on the development of the affective measures, see A. N. Oppenheim, "Attitudes in Civic Education in Several Countries: Development of Cross-National Scales" to be published by the Publishing Division of the National Foundation for Educational Research in England and Wales in early 1972.)

Other student background measures specific to civic education were also developed. These include: interest in civics; frequency of discussion of civic and political matters with friends, parents and teachers; self-assessment of one's own civic views; student civic activities; perceptions of peer-group decision making, particularly rejection of parental values; anticipatory socialization and conformity; perceptions of classroom climate with regard to civic equality; encouragement of independence; and patriotic ritual.

The civic education committee has also furnished items for the IEA Student, Teacher and School Background Questionnaires as well as for the National Case Study Questionnaire. Although some of the instruments were speficically developed for all three population levels, (to examine growth in political socialization), it is to be regretted

that no National Center has tested Population I. This age group was not tested for a variety of reasons such as cost of the study, difficulty of identifying civic education at that age level, potential reading difficulties for some of that age group, etc. However, Populations II and IV were tested in the Federal Republic of Germany, Finland (II only) Iran, Ireland, Israel (II only), the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden (IV only) and the United States during 1971.

The data will be analysed during 1972. The types of questions or hypotheses which we have proposed for our data analysis are exemplified by the following questions: 1) What are the relationships among national efforts in civic education and national/or international performance on cognitive and attitudinal measures? 2) Are there meaningful and important associations among cognitive test scores, attitudinal measures, and student background results as well as other tests of civic importance? 3) Does teacher training or classroom climate have a measurable and significant effect on student performance? 4) Why is civic education better tested through a combination of attitudinal and/or cognitive/background measures? 5) Are civics courses so redundant that exposure to, or time spent on, courses or programs in social studies/history/civic education topics does not seem to matter or cannot be measured in terms of educational impact? 6) What are the relationships among school type, attitudinal structure, and performance on achievement measures? These are just a few examples of the several hundred questions which we propose to measure in our international study of civic education. The committee welcomes other suggestions from those interested in this unique and important study, the results of which will be published sometime in 1973.